

Open Burning & You

What is open burning?

Open burning is the burning of combustible materials in such a manner that the products of combustion are emitted directly to the atmosphere. The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has rules that address open burning and clearly identify when it is permissible and under what conditions.

Open burning is prohibited in most situations because it can cause air pollution, which can be harmful to human health and the environment.

How does open burning affect public health?

Open burning produces smoke, a complex mixture of gases and fine particles. The biggest health threat comes from the fine particles that can get into your eyes and respiratory system. When inhaled, these particles can accumulate in the respiratory system causing persistent coughs, wheezing, and physical discomfort and can aggravate existing respiratory diseases such as asthma and chronic bronchitis. Older adults, children, and people with heart or lung disease are more susceptible.

How does open burning affect the environment?

Chemicals contained in smoke, when mixed with rainwater, can speed up the deterioration of man-made materials such as concrete, metal products and paint. Open burning of rubber, plastic



and other materials is prohibited because it can produce hazardous air pollutants such as dioxins, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, formaldehyde, and hydrochloric acid. (See <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/backyard/>)

Is open burning prohibited?

The open burning of refuse and combustible materials is prohibited unless conducted in strict accordance with DEQ rules. The open burning of tires is not allowed. No person shall accept and or transport combustible material to property other than where it is generated in order to perform open burning, (except as stated in #9 under permissible open burning).

Examples of when open burning is prohibited

- Burning your household trash when you DO have trash collection service available
- Burning tires
- Burning during a burn ban declared by the Governor or local government official.

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- Burning during a county or state declared burn ban or when an Ozone Watch or Particulate Matter Watch is declared for the county in which the burn is to be conducted. (See www.deq.state.ok.us. The DEQ website will contain the message “No Ozone or PM Watch in Effect”, or it will contain the icon . If you click on the icon, you will go to a page that provides the details of what counties are covered by the Watch.).

Is open burning permissible, and if so, under what circumstances?

The following is a list of ten (10) situations where open burning is allowable.

- 1.) Fires purposely set for the instruction and training of fire-fighting personnel, with approval from DEQ (form to complete).
- 2.) Fires set for the elimination of a fire hazard and the removal of dangerous or hazardous materials, when there is no other option and you obtain prior approval from DEQ.
- 3.) Campfires, ceremonial, or outdoor fires for non-commercial food preparation.
- 4.) Fires purposely set to forest, crops, or range land for the management of forests or wildlife.
- 5.) Land clearing or right-of-way maintenance. In Oklahoma City or Tulsa Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), you must use an Air Curtain Incinerator (ACI) (Counties in the Oklahoma City MSA are Canadian, Cleveland, Grady, Lincoln, Logan, McClain, and Oklahoma. Counties in the Tulsa MSA are Creek, Okmulgee, Osage, Pawnee, Rogers, Tulsa, and Wagoner).
- 6.) Burning of domestic household waste when no collection/disposal service is available.
- 7.) The burning of hydrocarbons spilled or generated as waste from oil field activities which cannot be feasibly recovered otherwise. DEQ

- must be notified prior to the burn. (Burning of hydrocarbons on water or where the residue will wash into waters of the state is prohibited).
- 8.) The disposal of waste hydrocarbons through use of a flare.
 - 9.) The burning of clean lumber and wood waste in an air curtain incinerator which has been properly designed and operated for the control of smoke and particulate matter.
 - 10.) To eliminate yard brush burned on the property where it is generated.

In addition, permissible open burning must be conducted in accordance with all applicable laws, ordinances and rules. In all instances, permissible open burning must not create a public nuisance nor are persons conducting the open burning exempt from consequences, damages or injuries resulting from the burn.

Disaster Relief

The DEQ Executive Director may allow open burning of debris resulting from a disaster if it is determined such burning is necessary to protect public health and safety. Such approval, if granted, shall be accompanied by appropriate guidelines for burning the debris.

Open Burning Complaints

The DEQ investigates all complaints of open burning. Our complaints hotline phone number is 1-800-522-0206. Not all instances of open burning constitute a violation. However, when a violation is found, the DEQ takes action to cause the open burning to cease.

To go to the DEQ open burning rule, use the link <http://www.deq.state.ok.us/rules/100.pdf> and scroll to Subchapter 13 Open Burning.